Notes

1 Music hall still lacks a thorough history, to counteract the wealth of anecdotal and nostalgic books on the subject. Among the few serious studies, my account is particularly indebted to Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London 1870–1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class' in Bernard Waites, Tony Bennett, Graham Martin (eds.), *Popular Culture Past and Present*, London, Croom Helm, 1982; Bernard Waites, 'The Music Hall', Open University Popular Culture Course Unit 5, Milton Keynes, Open University, 1981; Michael Chanan, *The Dream That Kicks*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.

2 Stedman Jones, op. cit., p. 115.

3 Chanan, op. cit., p. 135.

4 Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, p. 298.

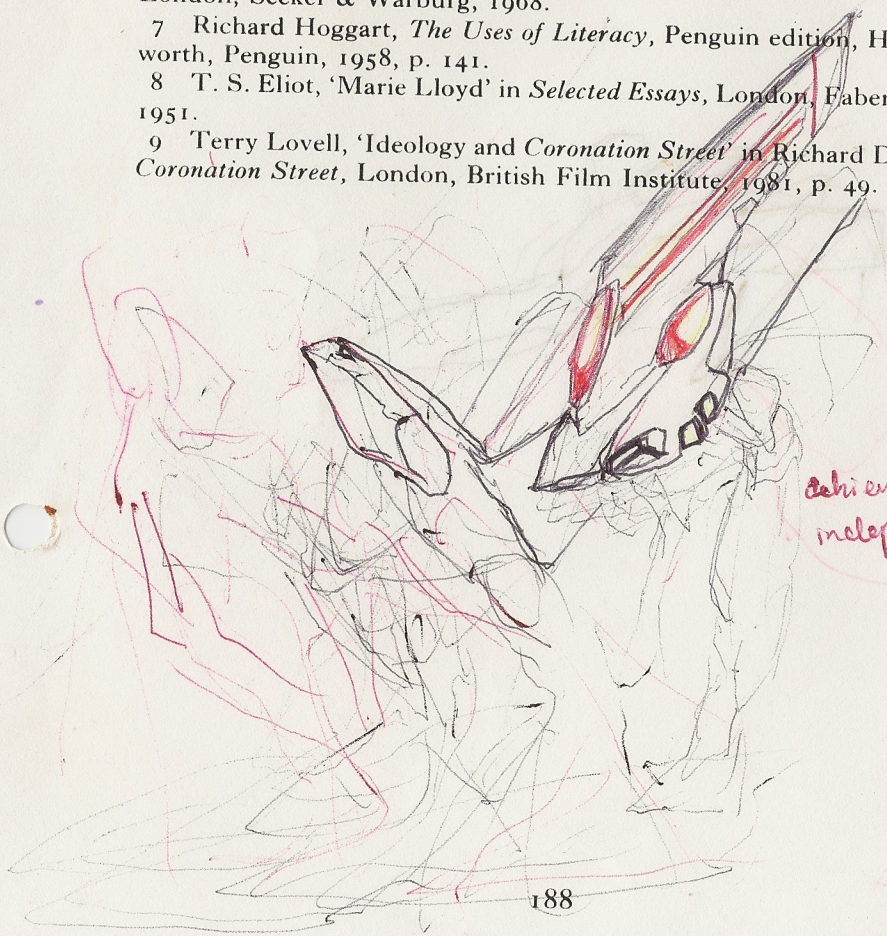
5 Jeff Nuttall and Rodick Carmichael, *Common Factors/Vulgar Factions*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 24.

6 George Orwell, *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, vol. 2, London, Secker & Warburg, 1968.

7 Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, Penguin edition, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1958, p. 141.

8 T. S. Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd' in *Selected Essays*, London, Faber & Faber, 1951.

9 Terry Lovell, 'Ideology and *Coronation Street*' in Richard Dyer (ed.), *Coronation Street*, London, British Film Institute, 1981, p. 49.



John Caughie

BROADCASTING AND CINEMA

1: CONVERGING HISTORIES

Histories of British cinema and of British broadcasting serve to establish their separate chronicles and developments. What they often miss are the terms by which these separate developments and the ideological impulses behind them can be seen to belong to the same culture. What I want to do here, from within the confusions, contradictions and uncertainties of the mid-1980s, is to unravel some threads, beginning with a small knot of historical coincidences.

1927. On 1 January, the British Broadcasting Company, incorporated as a private monopoly in 1922 to protect the interests of radio manufacturers, became the British Broadcasting Corporation. The change in title signified, albeit obliquely, a shift from private to public monopoly, from protection in the private, commercial interest to protection in the public interest. The new Corporation received its Royal Charter, its funding (a licence fee on receiving sets determined by government and administered by the Post Office), and its somewhat provisional independence from state control, on the condition that it used the public airwaves to provide a public service. John Reith, subsequently (and consequently) Sir John and later Lord Reith, had been General Manager of the Company since 1922; having manoeuvred effectively against the commercial interest of his private paymasters, he became in 1927 the first Director-General of the new Corporation. Monopoly, for Reith, was a moral imperative. Without monopoly, he later wrote,

> many things might not have been done so easily that were done. The Christian religion and the Sabbath might not have had the place and the protection which it was right to give them. . . . The Christian religion, not just as a sectional activity but as a

fundamental. And as to the Sabbath, one day in the week clear of jazz and variety and such like. . . . Almost everything might have been different. The BBC might have had to play for safety, prosecute the obviously popular lines, count its clients, study and meet their reactions, curry favour, subordinate itself to the vote.[1]

Public monopoly could only be justified by public service; but in order to serve the public, broadcasting had to be free both from the commercial pressures of mass entertainment and from the political pressures of mass persuasion. The name which was given to the various forms of negotiated relationship with the state and the market-place (with the state as the lesser evil by a long way) was independence.

1927. On 31 January, John Grierson returned to Britain from the United States, where he had spent two years on a scholarship studying mass communications (in 1927, for a student just out of a Scottish university, that in itself seems interesting) and writing about cinema. On his return, he went to see Stephen Tallents (later Sir Stephen Tallents), Secretary of the recently established Empire Marketing Board, a government agency charged with the promotion of Britain and British trade in the Empire and at home. The story is well known: Grierson persuaded Tallents and Tallents persuaded the Treasury that cinema, and specifically documentary cinema, should receive government funding to 'bring the Empire alive'. On the basis of government funding and sponsorship, Grierson recruited the film-makers of the EMB Film Unit, later to become the GPO Film Unit, and later still to become the basis of the Crown Film Unit to meet the more specific demands of wartime propaganda. This is the familiar narrative of the British Documentary Movement. In its various institutional forms during the 30s and 40s, the Movement was supported by a system of state sponsorship, creating a protected cinema outside the commercial sphere, operating as a service to a public whose interests were identified with the Imperial state: like Reith's BBC, a service independent from commerce, dependent on the state. For Grierson,

> Cinema is neither an art nor an entertainment: it is a form of publication, and may publish in a hundred different ways for a hundred different audiences. . . . The facts are simple enough. In a world too complex for the educational methods of public speech and public writing, there is a growing need for more imaginative and widespread media of public address. Cinema has begun to serve propaganda and will increasingly do so. It will be in demand.

> It will be asked to create appreciation of public services and public purposes. It will be asked from a hundred quarters to create a more imaginative and considered citizenship. It will be asked too, inevitably, to serve the narrower viewpoints of political or other party propaganda . . .[2]

This, for Grierson, is the future for the 'art of the cinema', a future which may lie not in cinemas, but in YMCAs, church halls 'and other citadels of suburban improvement'; it may even lie (in 1935) in television. (The way in which Grierson's notion of cinema as a form of publication anticipates by over forty years the Annan Committee's recommendations, published in 1977, on what the fourth television channel should be, suggests something of the continuity of the Griersonian institutional form.) What is certain is that 'in the commercial cinema there is no future worth serving'. As for Reith with broadcasting, so for Grierson with cinema, commerce is the enemy of any serious social or moral purpose. For both, the necessary refuge is provided by the state and by the service of the public interest which can give broadcasting and cinema their necessary independence from the market-place of public taste. It can make them 'serious' and lift them out of the realm of mere entertainment. The serious job of broadcasting and cinema is to create an audience rather than simply to pander to it; the public interest which is defined by Reith in terms of religion and morality is defined by Grierson in terms of civic education and an informed citizenry.

1927, then, marks the formal opening for both cinema and broadcasting of a relationship with the state and the public which has as its common terms public service and independence. This relationship is also the institutional form of an ideological hostility to commerce (or, more accurately, to Mammon) and a cultural hostility to the frivolities of 'mass entertainment' and the Dream Factory. The coincidence of 1927 is, of course, partly fortuitous. What I want to suggest, though, is that in 1927 a certain attitude to entertainment became institutionalised within British broadcasting and cinema, and that the solidity which the attitude gained from its institutionalisation has been a defining factor in the development of British film and television, and in the formation of an idea of 'serious' film and television which critics still promulgate and people carry in their heads. Reith left the BBC in 1938 and Grierson left the GPO Film Unit in 1937, but their influence would endure both within and beyond those particular institutions. 'Independence' and 'public service' occupy a position of such conscious or unconscious centrality in thinking about British film and television culture that it is only now,

in the mid-80s, when both terms are seriously under threat, that we begin to discover, with a touch of panic, that they are not the natural condition.

To remain for a moment longer with coincidence, the neatness of the fit between Reith and Grierson does not stop with the accident of dates. The fact that both men were Scottish may be seen as more than a biographical curiosity. Reith was the son of a Church of Scotland minister, a son of the manse; Grierson was a dominie's son, brought up in a rural Scottish schoolhouse, his father the local headmaster, his mother the daughter of a family of Ayrshire radicals. Within Scotland, this kind of background, to which both men refer with respect, is more than a question of parentage; rather, it places both men in their formation within the institutions, church and school, which form the backbone of a very particular and peculiar form of popular democracy: the Scottish presbyterian community. The Church of Scotland, repressive and authoritarian in its moral and spiritual precepts, was democratic in its forms, operating for most of the nineteenth century, through General Assembly, Presbytery and local Kirk Session, a system of local government, free from aristocratic patronage or state charity, which undertook not only the moral but also the physical and social welfare of its parishioners. Education, poverty, disability, as well as correction, were under the supervision of Church government. The school was the secular arm of the Church welfare system. Within the community, the dominie was second in authority only to the minister and the elders of the Kirk: education was a thing to be treated with ponderous respect as the agency of a social and geographical mobility which transformed the 'local lad' into the 'lad of parts'. Many of the attitudes associated with all this, including masculinism and patriarchy, are still apparent in Scottish educational institutions today.

It isn't necessary, then, to go to the mystical excess of Reith's biographer ('the dark and simple superstitions of Calvinism had been bred in his bones like a hereditary disease'[3]) to see that there might have been something in Reith's institutional patrimony which would make it easy for him to find nothing particularly strange or contradictory in an institutional arrangement which attempted to hold together authoritarianism, paternalism, moral guidance and public service. Nor is it difficult to find in Grierson's writing ('I look on cinema as a pulpit and use it as a propagandist'[4]) the often biblical tones of a Scottish secular radicalism informed by a passionate respect for universal education and community service. Significantly, by the beginning of the twentieth century the Scottish presbytery was a system of local democracies quite at ease with the state, distinct from the tradition of English popular democracies which had been

formed in organised conflict with the state for much of the nineteenth century. Reith and Grierson, quite different in most respects, shared a tradition which saw no contradiction between serving the people and serving the state.

Again, the coincidences, if only at a symbolic level, serve to tie a series of knots within the development of British film and television culture and its institutional forms. The coincidences can be extended into a kind of institutional Scottish country dance, with Reith and Grierson exchanging partners. After the war and his retirement from the BBC, Lord Reith became the first chairman of the National Film Finance Corporation, with Group Three, a short-lived independent feature film company run jointly by Grierson and John Baxter (1951–55), as one of its first major clients. In the 1950s, when Scottish Television was given the commercial franchise for Central Scotland (under the chairmanship of the Canadian, Roy Thomson, who endeared himself to all enemies of commerce by declaring that a commercial television franchise was 'a licence to print money'), John Grierson was given a very popular weekly slot, *This Wonderful World*. This programme, for which Grierson selected and presented extracts from international documentary, ran from 1957 to 1966, and brought something of the prestige of public service and the documentary movement to commercial television. In the 30s, Grierson had urged the artist to 'organise his independence' by 'going direct to public service for his material and his economy'. In the 40s, Reith urged on the National Film Finance Corporation a recognition of the influence which the film industry 'can exercise over so considerable a proportion of the population – interests, outlook and behaviour; in the projection of England and the English way of life to the Dominions and foreign countries; in the enhancement of the prestige and worth of England'.[6] The same terms reverberate backwards and forwards between Reithian broadcasting and Griersonian cinema, forming an ideological and cultural nexus which comes to define the serious purpose of film and television. This seriousness of purpose helps to explain the ferocity of the debate over commercial television in the early 50s, when public service seemed threatened by the debased Americanised values of commercial television. The interiorised values of public service and independence also help to explain something of the difficulty which 'serious' British critics and 'serious' British producers seem to have with the idea of entertainment.

Moving out from the cluster of institutional, biographical and ideological knots, it is clear that, though they may be founded on the same terms, the histories of cinema and television are far from identical. The line of development of public service broadcasting is

more or less continuous. The Reithian tradition became a fact, confirmed by wartime and by post-war cultural reconstruction. Even commercial television, whose arrival was predicted as the end of broadcasting as we knew it, was quite quickly institutionalised as a kind of quasi-public service, until it is now, with Channel Four, the main hope of a recycled and regenerated public service. The line of development of a 'public service cinema', if such a term is even appropriate, is far less clear, existing only intermittently as a fact, though consistently important as an idea whose time is always about to come and as an ideal whose failure to materialise has provided British critics with an always available reproach with which to berate the British film industry.

For broadcasting, it was in the immediate post-war period that the 'cultural mission' of elevating national standards was most explicitly undertaken. This was a time when the BBC had ceased to be at the service either of direct national propaganda, or of Reith's own narrower moral and religious imperatives, and was beginning to plan a service, including a television service, which would interweave more fully with the fabric of national life. Director-General William Haley had stated in 1943:

> The BBC must provide for all classes of listener equally. This does not mean it shall remain passive regarding the distribution of these classes. It cannot abandon the educative task it has carried on for twenty-one years to improve cultural and ethical standards.[7]

And he restated the policy in 1949:

> The aim of the BBC must be to conserve and strengthen serious listening. . . . While satisfying the legitimate public demand for recreation and entertainment, the BBC must never lose sight of its cultural mission. . . . The BBC is a single instrument and must see that the nation derives the best advantage from this fact.[8]

As a part of the fabric of national life, broadcasting was charged through the charter of the BBC with entertainment, information and education, but its self-adopted 'educative task' in the period immediately after the war was a redistribution of classes by raising cultural standards towards an approved level, leading listeners from light entertainment on the Light Programme, through talks on the Home Service, to 'serious listening' on the Third Programme. This was not, as it might be now, an invisible, unconscious ideology at work, surrounding broadcasters like the air they breathed; it was a conscious, agreed policy, referred to unashamedly by Haley as the

The single play: *The Shadow of the Ruthless*, directed by Philip Saville in 1959 for ABC TV's 'Armchair Theatre'

'slow but rewarding process of raising public taste',[9] and endorsed by the Labour Education Minister of the day as the laudable project of turning Britain into a 'Third Programme nation'. This was the climate in which television had to fight within the BBC for committed attention: even in the early 50s, its growing popularity was as much an embarrassment to the tradition of BBC thinking as it was a sign of success.

The discourse of public improvement seems only possible within the myth of consensus which reigned in the immediate post-war period, assuming as it did a society at peace with the world and with itself. After 1956, with a shift in the political and cultural climate and with the arrival of commercial television, such a clear and confident statement of the 'cultural mission' would be hard to find. But, at the same time, it would be hard to understand the disposition of post-war British television without a recognition of the determining influence of this concept of public service. In information and education, it guarantees the status of news and current affairs; in entertainment, it underwrites the tradition of the single play. 'Serious drama' is always

expensive, always awkward within the schedules, and frequently controversial. It would be difficult to account for the survival of the single play (whether on videotape or on film) in Britain, long after it had disappeared or transformed itself beyond recognition almost everywhere else, without the concept of a cultural public service. In a post-war society celebrating the myth of classlessness, broadcasting, like the recently formed Arts Council, took on the traditional aristocratic role of cultural patronage, supporting the artist in return for the privilege of a state-protected monopoly. While radio supported the musician and the poet, television supported the single play as the mark of its cultural seriousness in the area of entertainment. Drama, in fact, with its prestige derived from the high national and international standing of British theatre, resolved that apparent dichotomy between entertainment and serious public service which always threatened to disturb the BBC's sense of its own mission.

It has to be stressed, though, that it was commercial television, anticipated and feared as giving a 'foot in the door' to pulp Americanism, which first developed the single play as a specific and vigorous televisual form with its 'Armchair Theatre', a regular Sunday night series, networked from 1956, which captured a large popular audience. Public service as an ideology was not the monopoly of the BBC, and commercial television, formed under licence to the state, could use the single play to show that, despite its advertisements and its game shows, it too was culturally serious. At the same time, as in America, the single play slot had a restricted life on commercial television, and the tradition of 'serious drama' shifted back to the BBC. Throughout the 60s and 70s, the schedules were peppered with single plays which were socially realist, often critically so, seeking out the 'nitty-gritty' of ordinary and under-privileged life, proclaiming themselves to be controversial, challenging, even shocking, asserting insistently that the public was best served by showing the harsh realities.

By the 1970s, after the success in particular of the BBC's 26-part dramatisation of Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* (1967), the single play tradition had acquired two partners, or rivals, in the field of high-prestige drama: the classic serial, and the serialised historical costume drama. Both had the advantage of appealing to areas of cultural prestige – English Literature, and the history of the nation – within forms which were more cost-effective than the one-off play. Just as the single play derives its prestige from Britain's theatrical tradition, so literary adaptation fits comfortably into the needs of a public service system by recycling for a wide popular audience the classic literature of Britain's Great Tradition.

Social realism and literary/historical adaptation: throughout the

Prestige productions for the international TV market: Anthony Andrews and friend in Granada's *Brideshead Revisited* (1981)

70s the two co-existed, setting a standard, and securing for television a distinctive place within the national culture. Public service was its own justification. In the 80s, it is becoming clearer that a number of shifts were and are happening.

On the one hand, television, and particularly the BBC, was locked into a notion of prestige and seriousness which cost a great deal of money, more than could comfortably be raised by the licence fee system. On the other hand, that very prestige of Britain's literary tradition and historical pageant was discovered to be a highly saleable commodity on the growing international television market. The economic solution is fairly obvious: a movement of resources towards internationally prestigious adaptations which will recoup their costs in sales and pre-sales, and an exploitation of Britain's reputation as 'the least worst television in the world' to secure co-production and co-financing. This option is more readily available to commercial television, uninhibited as it is by any tradition of unease about commerce; its most striking results are *Jewel in the Crown* and *Brideshead Revisited*, both produced by Granada. The fact that the BBC's adventures in the international market have been less spectacular both in investment and in success may be commercial inaptitude, or it may be, as the privatisers would argue, that the BBC is inhibited by its reliance on 'public' money. But it may also be,

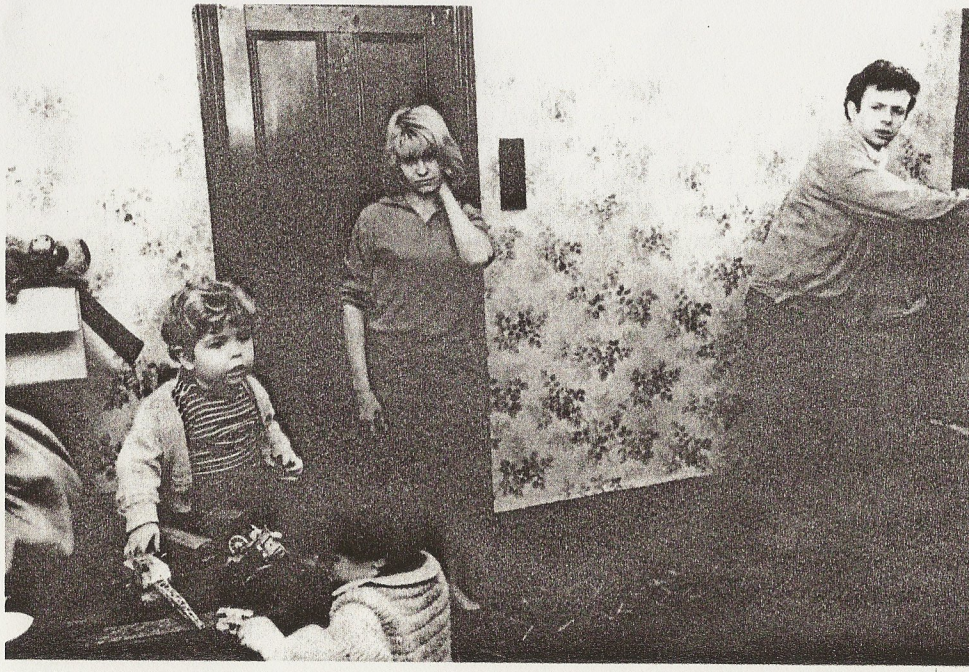
more charitably, a lingering and uncertain memory of public service. It is fairly clear that the rush to foreign markets leaves a large gap in the BBC's inherited policy of public service and the national cultural mission. Hence the BBC's current ungainliness: neither one thing nor the other, depending on a notion of public service for its public funding, but insufficiently funded to provide the increasingly expensive service which it has persuaded itself that the public wants: a national service increasingly dependent on the international market. One of the things which drops off the bottom of the international economic ladder is that very single play which had secured television's cultural seriousness by reflecting the nation to itself, and which, as a developing tradition, had depended on the kind of gestation and nurture which is no longer available in a market-led cultural economy. Increasingly, the space which the single play had occupied is being evacuated by in-house production, to be colonised by the independent film industry which can do the job more economically. As Grierson predicted in 1935, the independents are indeed seeking their independence through television, and it is increasingly the heirs of Grierson rather than of Reith who are fulfilling and transforming the role of public service in the area of television entertainment.

The concept of a public service cinema has neither currency, continuity, nor an institutional stability to compare with that of the BBC. The idea of such a cinema appears in Grierson as part of a vision of a British art cinema which would be protected from commercial imperatives in order that it might serve the public by reflecting it to itself: educating it, informing it and entertaining it, without having to face what Grierson saw as the inevitable commercial pressure of pandering to it. Without the institutional base of a public corporation, such a cinema clearly could not exist as a coherent thing, and it disappeared on the one hand into sponsored cinema, supported by government or by industry for public relations more than public service, and on the other hand into an art cinema which became increasingly socially exclusive. But it continued to exist as an idea, fuelling the case, in the 1940s and the 1970s particularly, for subsidy and forms of state cultural patronage, and marking out a crestline of British film which would be traced from the Documentary Movement and the Crown Film Unit, through bits of Balcon's Ealing, surfacing briefly in Free Cinema and rising in Woodfall in the early 60s, disappearing in the late 60s into television and the drama documentaries of Loach and Garnett, and reappearing in a very contradictory form in the arguments in the 70s around the British Film Institute Production Board and the Independent Film-makers' Association. Importantly, this crestline implies an idea of what a

British film is, and of what a British film industry would look like.

More positively, without the base of a single acknowledged public service corporation, the notion of a public service cinema is distinct from the autocratic paternalism of the Reithian moral mission, and fits in contradictory ways into the post-Reithian notion of a cultural mission. Public service here had more to do with creating a national cinema which had the same kind of cultural edge as the single play gave to television. Such a cinema would be distinct from the epic gloss of the later Lean, and from what was often seen as the rather too slick professionalism of Hitchcock: Grierson's remark that Hitchcock was 'the world's best director of unimportant pictures' is quite typical. Crucially, it was to be distinct from anything that smacked of the Hollywood 'dream factory'. In the post-war period the model that was frequently invoked was the Italian neo-realist cinema.

The British art cinema was to be socially responsible rather than arty, and its aesthetic was to be realist, embodying what has been referred to as a 'documentary attitude'. With a striking irony, it is precisely the kind of modest, naturalistic realism which people thought of as the mark of a British art cinema, a realism committed not simply to the narration of action but also to the description of the



Public service and the 'documentary attitude': the Ken Loach/Tony Garnett drama documentary *Cathy Come Home*, shown on BBC TV in 1966

social world, which became in the 60s the mark of the prestige of British television drama. The aesthetic of British art cinema prepared the way for its co-option into British public service television. The desire for a socially responsible art cinema was satisfied, at least for a time, in scale, commitment and immediacy, by the social realism of the television single play.

Institutionally, the British art cinema was to be defined by its independence, a term which is more meaningful as a polemic than as a description, masking in its claim of independence from something its dependence on something else. Essentially, the insistence on independence signifies a desire for a space outside institutional control. For cinema, the dominating force was Hollywood, and the independence which is so recurrently sought is an independence from the need to compete with Hollywood in the market-place.

The desire for independence seems to have been formative for British cinema in the same way that public service has been for television. Grierson's insistence that if the art of cinema is to survive 'it will be wise for the artist to organise his independence' points to a relationship between art and organisation which may be one of the characteristics of British film production. The need for the artist to organise an independence which was never given to him or her as a stable institutional norm may explain why, if we were to follow Andrew Sarris and claim that the history of American cinema is the history of its directors, we would also have to say that the history of the British cinema is the history of producers. Grierson himself, Balcon, Dean, Korda, Powell and Pressburger, Lean, Richardson, Reisz, Anderson, Attenborough, Puttnam: none of them are purely directors, many of them are not directors at all. Outside of a studio system or a national corporation, art is too precarious a business to be left to artists: it needs organisers. The importance of the producer-artist seems to be a specific feature of British cinema, an effect of the need continually to start again in the organisation of independence.

The organisation of independence has certain requirements, of which two are worth mentioning here. First, it needs mechanisms of financial support for pre-production and production; second, it needs exhibition outlets. To satisfy the first requirement, a public service cinema in its purest, Griersonian form would go directly to the state for sponsorship, offering a specific service to a specific department, and working, with as much latitude as could be justified, within the framework of a commission. For such a system to think of itself as a public service, it had to accept a close identity between the interests of the state and the public interest, and, almost by its very nature, it was restricted, outside wartime, to the documentary or semi-documentary which provided information and education rather

than to the feature film which provided entertainment. For an art cinema aspiring to the feature film, the appeal for state subvention had to be made to a broader sense of public service, one which depended on the recognition of cinema as an art form and a component of the national culture. Institutionally, the argument sought to escape the direct client relationship between cinema and state department. Between the late 1940s and the mid-1980s, the low-budget feature-film art cinema did indeed receive a small measure of financial support from the state, and, with it, some measure of recognition as a supportable public service. This came through the Eady Levy on cinema admissions, the National Film Finance Corporation, and certain quite important tax concessions and capital allowances. It was never a very stable system of support, and was in any case dismantled by the end of 1985, leaving television as an increasingly important source of production funding for the independent cinema.

Again, as has been noted, Grierson recognised that the future of the art of the cinema might not lie in the cinema at all, but in 'citadels of suburban improvement'. It was indeed one of the achievements of the Documentary Movement and the more politically radical working-class Kinos in the 1930s to develop a non-theatrical audience; and the importance of the Film Society movement for the development of British film culture should never be underestimated. Grierson also speculated on a 'controlled cinema', a municipal or state-controlled public service exhibition system which has never, in fact, materialised. What materialised in its place was the system of Regional Film Theatres administered (from 1967) by the British Film Institute, and, in Scotland, by the Scottish Film Council, alongside, in some cities, a circuit of independent commercial 'art house' cinemas. But, with the possible exception of London and Newcastle (no one, to my knowledge, has yet successfully explained Newcastle), these cinemas do little else than satisfy the demands of middle-class taste which the Rank/EMI exhibition duopoly fails to satisfy. They have little spare capacity to develop the kind of mass popular audience which the idea of a public service cinema in its Griersonian sense would seem to require. That audience seems to be watching television, and on television it is not always watching the bits that are conceived as public service.

What is becoming characteristic of the 1980s in the development of film and television culture is the increasing integration of independent cinema and public service television, not simply as common formative discourses but as a system of institutional dependencies. Serving the public implies finding an audience, and the audience has gone to television. To quote David Puttnam :'I make films for people

Experience Preferred But Not Essential (1982), produced by David Puttnam for Channel Four and subsequently released theatrically

to see. If I have a message to convey, I should convey it in whatever way the audience prefers to see it. In Britain the audience has an expressed preference to see my work on television.'[10] As the present government cuts off other sources of funding, Channel Four, the true heir of public service television, becomes an increasingly important source of pre-production funding. As television moves its resources in dramatic entertainment towards product for the international market, a space is left open in the public service area of television cultural programming for independent film-makers to occupy. This is not at all to suggest that the situation is a stable one in which public service television and independent cinema join forces to defend the public interest. It is rather that film and television are equally vulnerable to the current economic, political and ideological pressures against public service which come from domestic government, and to the pressures against national cultures which come from the growing power of the international market. The discourses of public service and independence, as they have traditionally been elaborated, may not be an adequate protection against these pressures.

The experience of Goldcrest Films and Television suggests some of the complexities of the current climate. Goldcrest is owned by the Pearson-Longman Group which also owns the *Financial Times* and Penguin Books. It was established to produce British films for cinema (*Gandhi, Local Hero, The Killing Fields*) and television. In 1981, its affiliated company Enigma (with David Puttnam as producer) made eight films for the first year of Channel Four's 'Film on Four' slot under the collective title of 'First Love'. Channel Four provided between £200,000 and £275,000 per film, and the rest of the budget and profit was to come from pre-sales to American cable TV which was then booming, and from limited American and British theatrical release. Each of the films was distinctly, if somewhat sentimentally, British, with something of the style of a single play on television but with an added visual sophistication derived from film production values.

In 1982, American cable companies were prepared to pay around £400,000 for the kind of television films which Goldcrest was producing. By 1984, with the beginnings of a collapse of cable in the face of video, which was just beginning to make real inroads into American domestic entertainment, the going rate had dropped to around £50,000. Since the Channel Four budget had remained level, this meant that the key to financial success was theatrical release, which might ensure a good price on the video market. But to gain a theatrical release, and, more importantly, distribution through an American major, without which films have to be sold territory by territory, low-budget films have to look like cinema films, not films for television. In 1984–5, therefore, Goldcrest's television plans were for ten films and a mini-series: six of the films budgeted at £1 million, and four at £500,000. Funding for the six major releases was to come from overseas sales and pre-sales.[11]

The coming together of the cinematic style and production values of the independent film-makers with the social reach of television, which seems at first sight to reinvigorate and transform the idea of public service with some of the values of entertainment, may be seen at second glance to be simply the first step towards the internationalisation of a national cinema and a national television system. Within its many contradictions, public service did provide a certain safeguard to notions of national culture.

The fragmentation into a utopia of local workshops and cable stations has a lot of economically based arguments to contend with. As in the manufacturing industries, so in the cultural industries: in a weak economy privatisation is the first step to either internationalisation or marginalisation. It is possible to be quite sanguine about the prospects of British film and television on the international market

(the case of Goldcrest is encouraging); and it is equally possible to be positively enthusiastic about locally based film workshops. It is the area between that seems most under threat, and we do have to contend with the fact that historically it has been the medium-budget feature film and the indigenous drama (the area which public service might have claimed as its own) which has often seemed to represent the best chance of a genuinely diverse national popular film and television culture.

The significance of 1985, then, British Film Year, is that it may end a cycle for cinema and broadcasting which began in 1927. The Films Bill, which cuts off the unlamented Eady Fund and shuts down the National Film Finance Corporation, begins the process which will lead to a massive dependence on private, and hence ultimately Hollywood, funding: the same funding from which Grierson sought refuge in the EMB Film Unit. For broadcasting, it seems possible that in 1986 the BBC will be instructed to begin some limited experiment with advertising or with subscription as a means of raising revenue,

Film for the BBC: Alan Bates in *An Englishman Abroad* (1983, directed by John Schlesinger)

placing the Corporation into a dependence on commerce or public taste from which Reith had tried to rescue it in 1927. The point is not to mourn public service, but to organise, again, independence. It seems clear that the particular discourses of public service and independence under which the debates and defences were conducted in the past were always weak, and are now perhaps redundant. The quite difficult job now will be to find the new terms which will provide some sense of what a national film and television culture, or national film and television cultures, will look like after 1985.

Notes

1 J. C. W. Reith, *Into the Wind*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1949, pp. 90–1.

2 Forsyth Hardy (ed.), *Grierson on Documentary*, London, Faber, 1946, pp. 118–19.

3 Andrew Boyle, *Only the Wind Will Listen: Reith of the BBC*, London, Hutchinson, 1972, p. 34.

4 Quoted in *Grierson on Documentary*, p. 12.

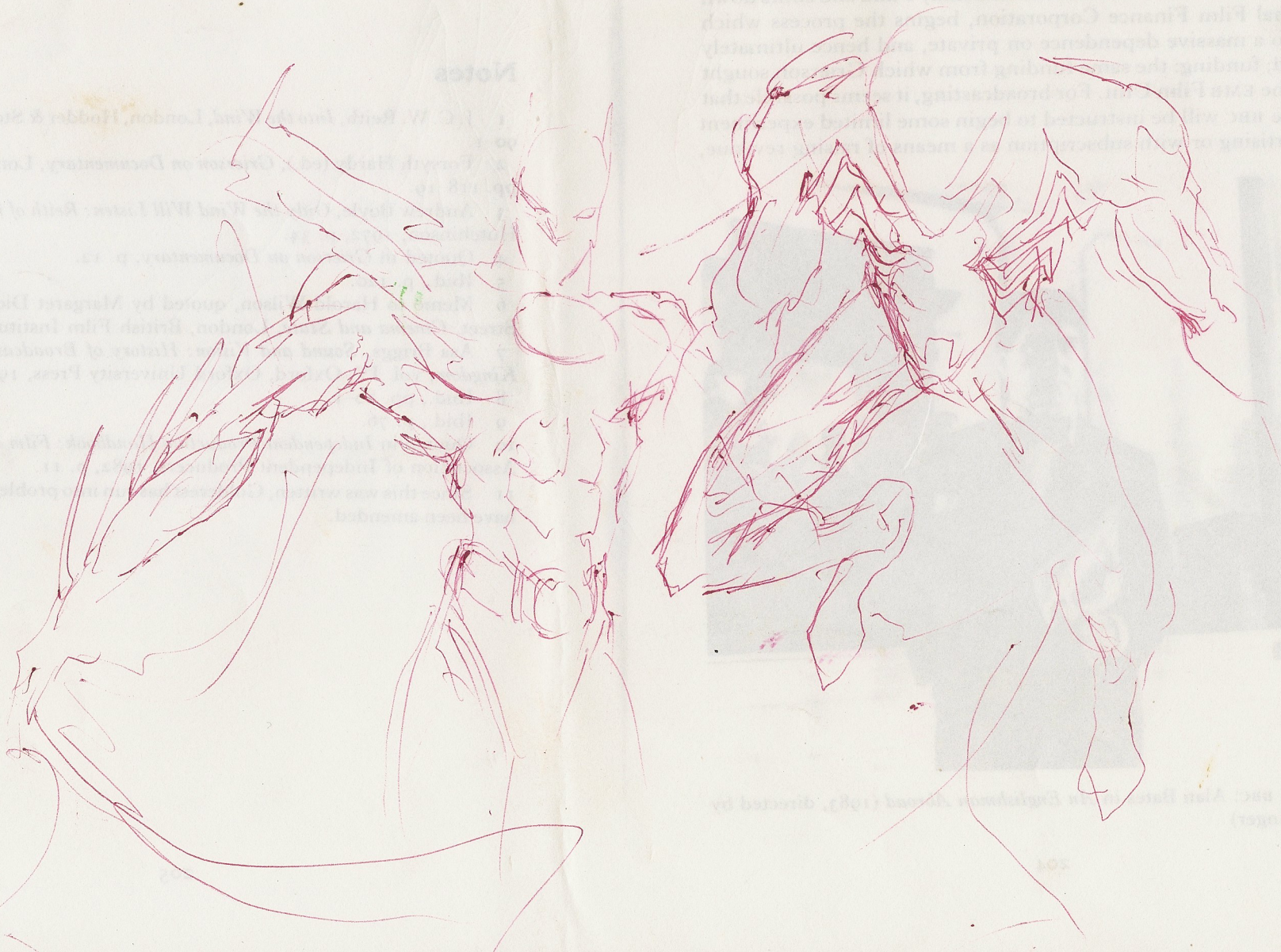
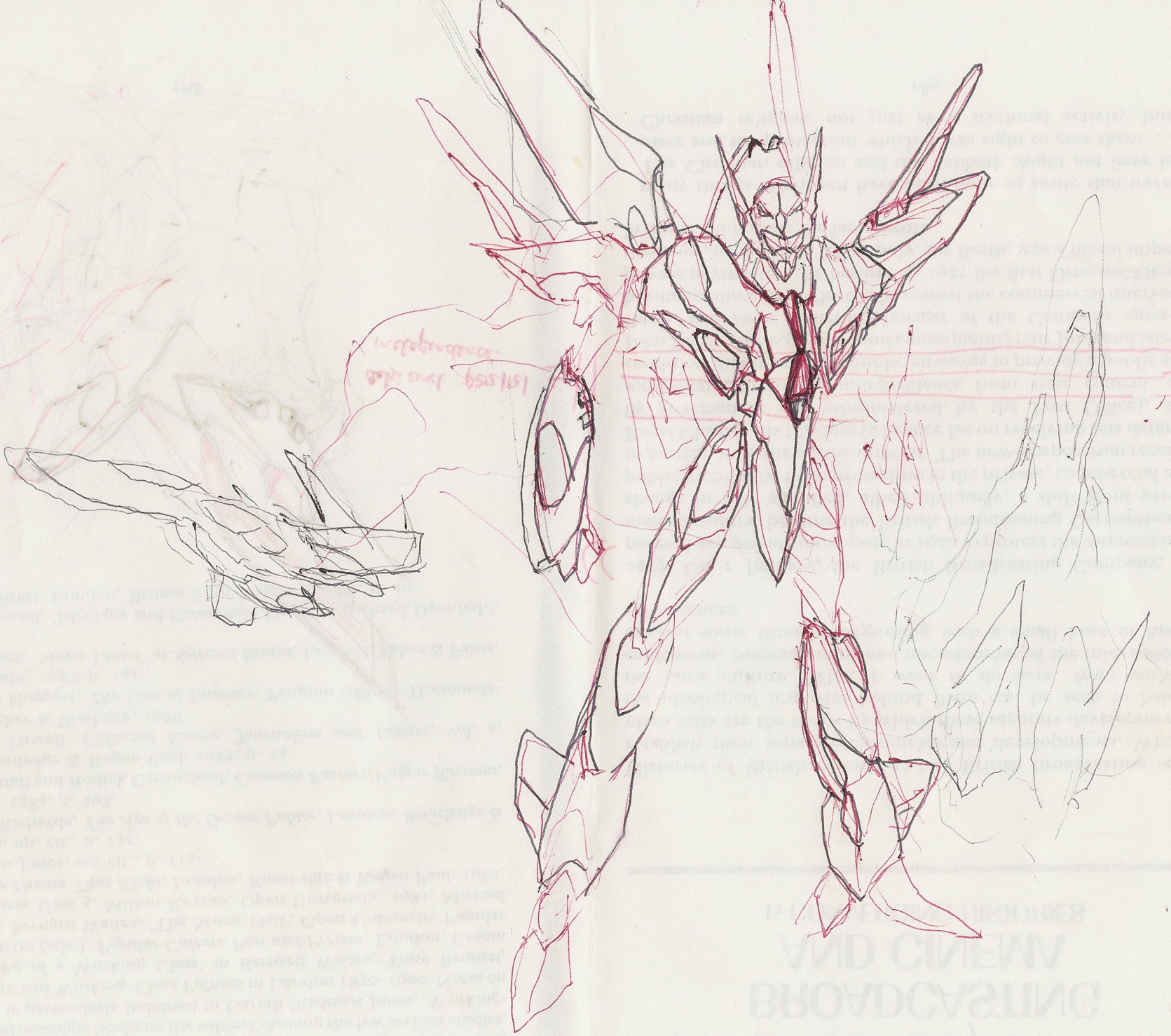
5 Ibid., p. 120.

6 Memo to Harold Wilson, quoted by Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street, *Cinema and State*, London, British Film Institute, 1985, p. 216.

7 Asa Briggs, *Sound and Vision: History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol. IV, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 28.

8 Ibid., pp. 80–1.

9 Ibid., p. 76.

10 Quoted in *Independent Production Handbook: Film & Video*, London, Association of Independent Producers, 1982, p. 11.

11 Since this was written, Goldcrest has run into problems and these plans have been amended.